

THE MOSCOW-CAIRO AXIS

Its Aim: To Drive the West Out

WALTER Z. LAQUEUR

EVER since the Communist-Egyptian arms deal in the autumn of 1955, there has been an unaccustomed, busy traffic of delegations to and from the Soviet bloc and the Arab countries, pledging undying friendship and (from the Soviet side) all kinds of economic aid. The Soviet Union has agreed to install Egypt's first nuclear laboratory; Hungary is going to build new bridges across the Nile; Bulgaria will carry out construction work in Alexandria harbor. The East Germans will be drilling for water in the Sudan, the Czechs are going to construct oil refineries in Syria, the Poles a new railroad in Saudi Arabia. Soviet engineers are already busy in Yemen and Lebanon, and the Poles have received a bid to build steel plants in Egypt. In the last few months, China has become the single most important buyer of Egyptian cotton. This list could be prolonged indefinitely.

On the political level, the Soviet Union has established relations with Libya and the Sudan, renewed her ties with Yemen, and considerably strengthened her diplomatic representation throughout the Middle East. The other Communist countries are following suit. At the recent 20th Party Congress, Molotov ate humble pie for not having paid proper attention, until recently, to the chances for extending Soviet influence

COMMUNIST machinations are not the sole cause of the Middle Eastern crisis, but it would certainly lack its present urgency without them, as WALTER Z. LAQUEUR shows. A frequent contributor to these pages, Mr. Laqueur was until recently a political commentator on the Israeli radio, and is now on a prolonged stay in England. Born in Breslau, Germany, in 1921, he went to Palestine in 1938. His last previous appearance in COMMENTARY was with "The Kastner Case" (December 1955).

in the Middle East. But it would be difficult to charge his ministry with neglect of such opportunities now: Gamal Abdel Nasser is to visit Russia and Eastern Europe in the near future, and Khrushchev and Bulganin will return the visit some time this year.

Meanwhile "cultural exchange," too, has been going forward at a merry pace. Cairo and Damascus have been swamped with East European ballet groups, Soviet films, Hungarian football players, and Bulgarian and Czech cyclists (competing in the "Tour d'Egypte"). The Cairo Opera has been taken over these last few months by four folklore ballet groups from Eastern Europe and the ensemble of the Peking opera. Dozens of exhibitions have been arranged and many new periodicals have appeared, all in the cause of Soviet-Arab collaboration.

Open at random any of the mass-circulation Egyptian weeklies such as *Rose-al Yusuf* or *At Tahrir* and you will find articles by or on the "Red Dean" of Canterbury, by Ilya Ehrenburg, excerpts from the writings of Mao Tse-tung, Stalin, and Khrushchev, articles on the position of women in the New China, reports on a visit to a Soviet atomic power station, and little else—apart, of course, from the routine attacks on Israel and "Western colonialism," and the usual Cairo society gossip. Since December last, the Cairo and Damascus radios have been re-broadcasting Tass bulletins and Moscow radio talks in Arabic.

AN INTERESTING feature of the Communist wooing of the Arabs is the wide use made of Soviet and Chinese representatives of Moslem origin. Quoting the Koran, Burhan-al-Shadid (described as "head of the Chinese Moslem community") made an excellent impression in Cairo. Lebanese

cabinet ministers were enthusiastic in their praise of Miss Allah Solenkova's songs in Arabic (Solenkova is a member of the Leningrad Opera House). Western artists—the Dublin Gate Theater company, for instance, which was in Egypt in February—may offer more accomplished performances but cannot touch the same emotional chords. Religion, too, has been brought into play: for the first time ever the Soviet radio made a live broadcast from the Tashkent mosque in January 1956; and the new Soviet Armenian Patriarch, Vazgen I, was sent on a tour of duty through the Middle East.

More important still, the Soviet experts, shrewdly appraising the enormous vanity of most Arab politicians, have flattered and cajoled them to an extent unprecedented even by Levantine standards—and with considerable success. Egypt, with its glorious past, its heroic people, its superb culture, its selfless, progressive, hard-working, gifted, dynamic leadership, is daily lauded to the skies, and the other Arab countries receive similar treatment. All this has delighted the Arabs. Every day it becomes more obvious that Western economic help alone cannot have an equal political impact; fifty silk ties brought back as gifts by Egyptian journalists from a visit to China impressed Cairo public opinion far more—and certainly made a bigger splash in the press—than the United States' fifty million dollars for the Aswan High Dam.

Another important means of extending Soviet influence is rumor-mongering. Two recent examples should suffice as illustrations. The Damascus radio reported on March 11 that the Soviet government had decided to send Soviet Moslem warriors to take part in the impending holy war against Israel. *Rose-al Yusuf* of Cairo authoritatively announced on March 5 the resumption of anti-Jewish trials throughout the Eastern bloc. There is no reason to think that either of these reports is true, but those who spread such rumors know that it will make Arab listeners and readers "feel good" at least for a few days—and then the "news" will have been forgotten anyway, or super-

seded by some new rumor. The credulity of Arab public opinion, stimulated and helped along by the Arab governments, is apparently boundless. And the Communists know it.

Yet it must be doubted whether all the economic and political infiltration, the visits of ballet troupes and sports teams, the extravagant praise and the false rumors, are really as important as some Western observers make them out. The impact of even such a concentrated propaganda onslaught is not lasting. What really counts is the fact that the two blocs, Soviet and Arab, have now plainly embarked on a common course of action aimed at driving the West out of the Middle East and Africa. The present rulers of Egypt want big-power status for their country and Egyptian supremacy in Africa and the Middle East. Moscow, of course, doesn't give a hoot about Egyptian ambitions except as they help to embroil the Arab world with the West. Even if Nasser's drive proves unsuccessful, the result will be conflict between the Arabs and the West. On the other hand, the Soviet leaders have nothing to fear from the emergence of a new Middle Eastern-African empire headed by the Cairo junta—such a colossus, if it ever arose, which is highly unlikely, would have feet of clay.

Meanwhile Nasser promises to continue useful to Moscow for some years to come. In the age of atomic stalemate small countries can bluff and browbeat big powers and get away with it—provided they are impudent enough. Nasser has learned this lesson and can be relied upon to act on it until somebody calls his bluff. Considering what Western policy is like at present, both Moscow and Nasser are probably justified in thinking that day still far off.

UNTIL recently, the immediate goal of Soviet policy in the Middle East had been to prevent the establishment of a Middle Eastern defense organization collaborating with the West. By the end of 1955 this goal had largely been achieved: only one Arab country, Iraq, had joined

the Baghdad Pact, and even in Iraq, according to many observers, there is substantial opposition to this move, so that Iraq's adherence to the pact is not likely to outlast the present government of Nuri Said.

Soviet policy-makers have therefore been able to begin aiming at the next objectives in their campaign to eliminate Western influence from the Middle East: the dismantling of Western military bases (in Jordan, Iraq, Saudia, Libya, and elsewhere) and, perhaps even more important, the cutting off of the West from Middle Eastern oil. This last may turn out to be the main issue in the struggle now going on for the Middle East. Moscow has not been oversanguine lately about the possibility of an "automatic breakdown" of Western Europe as the result of an economic crisis or political disintegration; nevertheless, highly industrialized Western Europe, which gets 75 per cent of its oil from the Middle East, would be well-nigh fatally affected by the stoppage of oil deliveries from that area.

For some months now Middle Eastern oil has apparently been much on the minds of Soviet leaders. Khrushchev spoke about its importance for the West in a recent meeting with the Labor MP, Harold Wilson; and there was a highly significant passage in Anastas I. Mikoyan's speech at the 20th Party Congress which, for some reason or other, has been overlooked by most observers. He said: "In the Middle East in 1955, the United States and British oil monopolies took out 150 million tons of oil at a total cost of 240 million dollars. This is fabulously cheap. The net profit they made on this oil amounted to 1.9 billion dollars—one year's return covered the entire capital investment in that area. In Kuwait, for instance, their profits for one quarter-year equaled all the capital invested during the entire period. The U. S. oil industry would require at least six to seven years to get back its capital investment. If all the income earned from oil were to remain with its legitimate owners, the Arab and other peoples of the Middle East, how speedily might not these peoples abolish

poverty and go forward with their economic and cultural development, which has been retarded for years by the ruthless exploitation of the foreign capitalists."

THE theme of imperialist exploitation has since mid-February been sounded in countless variations by Soviet propaganda aimed at the Middle East. It has also been taken up by Egypt in its propaganda broadcasts to the Arab world—not that Egypt needed much prodding in this direction. Take the following broadcast over the Cairo radio on March 6, 1956: "The Arab rulers granted the exploiting imperialist companies a host of rights and concessions at the expense of the people struggling against them. The Arabs allow the crude oil to go to the countries of their enemies and colonizers. We do not want U. S. dollars, British pounds, French francs, or Dutch guilders. . . . O Arabs, our oil is plundered by aliens, it is seized by your enemy. Remember oil, our lost wealth! Oil is for the Arabs!"

In the contest between Moscow and the West for the Middle East, the Soviet position on the oil question seems strong, the Western one woefully weak. The Soviet leaders, to begin with, appear as disinterested onlookers: Middle Eastern oil is no vital concern of theirs, they have got along without it, and can go on doing so at least for some time to come. And so their advice to the Arab countries to withhold their oil from the West seems entirely altruistic—there is no direct economic gain for them in the West's loss. If the West should make difficulties, the Soviets stand ready to help by providing experts or machinery or by buying Arab oil themselves.

The Western position seems basically weak because of Western European dependence on Middle Eastern oil, the record of the Western oil companies, and the use that oil royalties have been put to in the past by the Middle Eastern governments. There is not much point in going into Mikoyan's facts and figures, which are hardly exact. But they do contain some truth. The profits of the American oil

companies in the Persian Gulf area rose from \$115 million in 1947 to \$300 million in 1951, and have probably trebled again since then. They have enjoyed a fabulous return of something like 500 per cent per barrel. In Iran, during the Mussadegh crisis when oil production was at a standstill, the Anglo-Iranian oil company was still able to pay a dividend of 30 per cent.

WHAT Mikoyan did not mention, however, was how much the governments of Arab oil-producing countries were paid this year, and have been paid over recent years, in revenues from oil industries developed with Western capital, management, equipment, and initiative. Here is the table of expected oil revenues for 1956 for the following governments:

Iran	(approx.)	\$100 million
Iraq		260 "
Kuwait		315 "
Saudi Arabia		300 "

What will be done with all this money? In what ways will the native populations benefit from it? Mikoyan kept quiet about the share the Arab regimes got of the oil profits. Moscow does not want to offend them at the moment. But to answer these questions is to provide cold comfort to the West, for the record of the Arab regimes' waste and greed can be made to look like a part of the irresponsibility of the American and British oil companies.

Let us leave Iran aside and go on to Iraq—it appears that about 70 per cent of the Iraqi oil income is officially allotted to various development schemes which may ultimately benefit the Iraqi national economy. It is only too well known, however, that much of this revenue will in fact find its way into the pockets of leading sheikhs and notables. Indeed, the majority of the Iraqi population is likely to suffer as a result of the inflation that has already followed the influx of so much money into the country.

Tocqueville once said that bad governments are never more in danger than when

resolving to mend their ways. After giving the Iraqi development schemes all due credit, it would appear wildly optimistic to expect them to have any stabilizing political effect in the near future. On the contrary, resentment against the government and the oil companies, fanned by Communist and nationalist propaganda, is likely to grow.

The story of Saudian oil need not be repeated in detail. More than four-fifths of the oil revenues are used to meet the whims of the King and his swollen family and to extend his prestige abroad—by buying newspapers, Syrian and Lebanese politicians, members of the Jordanian royal entourage, by paying Communist and nationalist rabble-rousers everywhere throughout the Middle East (except, of course, at home). The tastes of the King have become expensive over the years, and the bribes more substantial; the result is that Saudia is heavily overdrawn—the Chase National Bank had to advance it \$150 million the other day. One wonders what King Sa'ud's Western financiers think about the political effects of their loans—if indeed they give any thought in that direction. "*Après nous le deluge*" may be their motto—or perhaps they think blackmail is preferable to the King's seeking Soviet assistance. In any case it is a safe prediction that this unedifying spectacle will not go on indefinitely.

The Amir of Kuwait (the country producing the most oil right now) is a prudent man; he does not keep Jordanian queen mothers, Egyptian poets, or Communist agitators on his payroll. Instead he has built a number of hospitals and schools in his amirate and improved the roads. In addition, he is said to have a balance of about \$600 million in a British bank.*

It is easy to see how Communist and Arab nationalist propaganda could have a field day in these circumstances. Still, there are some serious difficulties in the way of the Communist and Egyptian goal of cutting the West off from Middle Eastern oil.

*See Ray Alan's "Stirrings in Araby" (April).

EGYPT and Syria, the main pillars of the pro-Eastern Arab bloc, are not among the main oil producers. Egypt could close the Suez Canal and Red Sea to Western ships—such a move was recently threatened in Cairo's *Al Mussawar* of March 9. (Israel, it is argued in Egypt, has to be eliminated in this connection alone, since she would afford the West an outlet on the Red Sea.) Syria could cut off the pipeline which runs from the Iraqi oilfields to the Lebanese coast, and this too has been threatened. But such moves would not bring Middle Eastern oil production to a standstill; most of the oil is shipped in tankers from the Persian Gulf, and 80 per cent or more of it could be brought round the Cape of Good Hope.

Which means that Soviet and Egyptian policy-makers have to tackle the matter of cutting off oil to the West right at the well-heads. And the way to do this is by agitating for nationalization. The cry for nationalization of Middle Eastern oil could be raised until it reached a pitch like that in Iran in 1951. The nationalization demand could be pushed most successfully in Iraq, where it coincides with the general nationalist drive against the Baghdad Pact and the Nuri Said government. Kuwait, a British protectorate, has no national opposition movement now, but one could be worked up soon enough, as was shown by the recent riots in neighboring Bahrain. The situation is more complicated in Saudia: King Sa'ud is an ally of the Egyptians and has received good marks in Moscow. The Egyptian leaders certainly don't want to see him thrown out now. But the Communists, of course, will oppose him in the long run, and may not find it too difficult to get rid of him in a few years' time. A political opposition has come up in Saudia in the last year or so, with its mainstay in a small, recently emerged middle class that is hostile to the medieval regime and has the elements of a "mass following" among the oilfield workers. This opposition is small and unorganized as yet, but then the ruling group is even smaller.

It was already fairly obvious by autumn 1955 that the Cairo junta could not go on very long praising the Communist parties of China and Russia while denouncing their home-grown species. And indeed since then they have modified their attitude to their own Communists considerably. Khaled Bakhdash, head of the Syrian Communist party, and the leading Communist of the Middle East, has been feted in Cairo and elsewhere lately. On his return from Egypt he wrote a series of articles in a Syrian paper, *Al Ra'i al A'am*, in which he put the stamp of his approval on Nasser's regime. There is no legal Communist newspaper in Egypt as yet, but writings by Soviet and Chinese leaders are currently published in Arabic by the leading periodicals of the country (like *Rose-al Yusuf*), which makes a separate Communist press almost unnecessary.

The Egyptian Communist movement itself has been split for the last fifteen years (DMNL [Democratic Movement for National Liberation], the main faction, is now strongly in favor of Nasser and his regime, whereas some minority factions still oppose him), but Nasser's junta includes prominent fellow-travelers like Gamal Salem, Deputy Prime Minister, and Fathi Ridwan, Minister of Propaganda in the cabinet. Ridwan, who helped to found Egypt's fascist party twenty years ago, subsequently became a leading "partisan of peace" and headed (*inter alia*) the Egyptian delegation to the Communist "Conference of Peoples" in Vienna in 1953. Many more examples could be given of the success of Communist infiltration in Egypt, not only in the government party, but also in the officer corps and other influential organizations.

But Syria is where the Communists are really making hay. For there they count among their well-wishers a majority of the members in the army's high command. This is one of the results of the Communist alliance with the left-wing nationalist Republican Socialist party, which has traditionally had a big military following. A minority of the Republican Socialists headed

by Michel Aflaq, an ex-Communist, opposed this close cooperation, but his rivals won out and as a result a rather anomalous situation now prevails. Though officially the Syrian Communist party remains illegal, the army's chief of staff sends letters of congratulation to the party's leader, Bakhdash, that are duly reported in the press. Syrian Communists have founded, or bought, a considerable number of daily and weekly newspapers, among which *At Talia* and *An Nur* are the most prominent. A newly founded cultural periodical, *As Thaqafa al watania*, is Communist, too, and reflects their hold on most Syrian professional organizations, including the writers', lawyers', and teachers' associations, etc., etc.

Communist infiltration of Syria has reached such a scale that Soviet propaganda in Arabic has lately felt obliged to play it down so as not to stir up counter-forces. And, with a modesty unprecedented among Communist leaders, Khaled Bakhdash, in a recent article in Moscow's *Pravda* (March 11, 1956), argued that Communist influence in the Middle East was more imaginary than real.

BUT Egypt matters far more than Syria, and in Egypt, as in most other Arab countries, the unwitting help given to the Soviet Union is of far greater importance than the conscious efforts of crypto-Communists, however highly placed. Colonel Nasser solemnly proclaims that his policy has been, and will remain, a neutral one; he explained the Soviet arms deal as a one-time commercial transaction forced upon him by the unwillingness of the Western powers to supply Egypt with the weapons she needed to defend herself against Israeli attack. It is not impossible that Nasser really believed that at the time, and in meetings with Western visitors he has reiterated his interest in Western, especially American, friendship. Unfortunately, his actions do not square with these words. Declarations he has made to the Communist press (such as the message of congratulations he sent to the World Communist Students movement [IUS]) and

an interview he gave the correspondent of a Bulgarian paper) contain some of the clues to his real intentions.*

In effect, Nasser has each month swerved further from his professed neutralism. Egypt's state-controlled press and radio make no critical remarks whatsoever about the Soviet world, whereas morning and night they fulminate wildly against the West. Things have gone so far that the Soviet press, in reprinting articles from Egyptian publications (as it occasionally does nowadays), feels obliged to omit some of the most offensive anti-Western expressions.

Nasser, like President Kuwatli of Syria, seems to believe in all earnest that he can make the Arab League a world power by playing off West against East, and vice versa. This illusion is undoubtedly based on bona fide Arab nationalism as well as on the time-honored Levantine belief that all foreigners are easy to outwit (though Nasser and Kuwatli exploit Arab nationalism for their own ends, too). Yet, whatever Nasser's original intentions, things have moved beyond them; he has set going forces over which he has lost control and, a prisoner of his own slogans, can only continue in power by moving in an increasingly anti-Western direction.

IT WOULD be quite wrong to attribute all these developments, as gratifying as they may be to Moscow, to the clever machinations of Soviet diplomacy. Arab nationalism is quite different from that of Pakistan, India, Burma, or Indonesia. The main desire of the national movements in the latter countries, once independence has been achieved, is domestic reform. The main desire of Arab nationalism, once its immediate

*In an interview with him that appeared in the Sofia *Rabotnichesko Dyelo* (February 24, 1956) Nasser said "that the Egyptian people admire the Bulgarians for their courage in the Second World War against fascism." Bulgaria, it will be remembered, did not take a conspicuous part in that war, and Nasser and most of the other members of his regime were at the time either followers of Egypt's fascist party, or, in any case, were fervently hoping for victory for the Nazis.

aims have been achieved, is to extend its sway, to seek political and military prestige, and great-power status. Arab nationalism, spearheaded by Egypt, is trying to establish a new empire embracing the continent of Africa and the Middle East right up to Pakistan.* It is the pursuit of this goal that has brought Egypt into conflict with the West.

Perhaps the conflict would not have broken out so soon if not for the Soviet drive in the Middle East in 1955, but it would be quite wrong to think that Soviet policy has *created* anti-Westernism among the Arabs. Moscow woke up to the fact that it could use this movement for its own ends only rather belatedly, when it was already in full swing.

There is a good reason to think that Moscow's aims in the Middle East will conform to those of the Egyptian-Syrian axis for some time to come. The foreign policies of these countries are what count in Soviet eyes, not their internal regimes, the Soviet assumption being that in a long-range view both countries are headed towards Communism anyhow, with their present governments inadvertently leading the way. All the evidence indicates that no Communist coups are in prospect, since a premature Communist victory in any one Middle Eastern country would probably have a boomerang effect in the others.

In these circumstances, Moscow lays particular stress on the activities of "front organizations," which in the Middle East have for some time now been of much greater political importance than the local Communist parties. Such fronts now exist in virtually all the professions, with their representatives meeting every few months in one of the Arab capitals. (The lawyers, for instance, met in Cairo in March; in Damascus early this year the formation of an "all-Arab workers organization" was mooted; the "progressive writers" are permanently in session.) Front organizations

have the great advantage of being able to act—sometimes even with government support—in countries such as Egypt where the Communist party itself is outlawed. At their conferences, anti-Western and anti-colonial resolutions are adopted, but no specifically Communist domestic demands seem ever to be made.

There is even some reason to assume that Moscow has had to restrain its over-zealous friends in the Middle East in their eagerness to attack the governments in power, lest the present "unity of action" which Moscow so highly prizes be disrupted. Such seems to have been the case in the Sudan after the recent Kosti outrage when the Communists and other opposition groups demanded the resignation of the government, and in Syria when Damascus students demonstrated in March against a government that had proved incompetent to cope with the internal crisis. But such incidents apart, the community of interests between Cairo-Damascus and Moscow seems to be a firm one, and there appears to be no reason to expect Arab-Soviet collaboration to come to an early end.

THE Soviet bloc's neutral attitude towards Israel has waned over the last twelve months in the same measure that its co-operation with the Arab world has waxed. Israel is invariably described as an "aggressor" attacking her peace-loving Arab neighbors; and the Moscow press and radio, as a matter of principle, carry only Arab accounts of Arab-Israeli border strife. Chinese Communist leaders have compared Israel with Formosa (according to the Egyptian press), implying that an Arab attack against Israel would not even be a war but merely a police action, an internal affair of the Arab states. At the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist party, the "fascization" of Israel was mentioned—a term applied to no other country. It was one of those funny coincidences which happen in world politics that the one and only country this side of the Iron Curtain that has an all-socialist cabinet in which a party subscribing to the

*See again Ray Alan's "Stirrings in Araby" in last month's issue.

tenets of Marxism-Leninism is represented should be charged with turning reactionary and fascist!

But again, as with Arab nationalism's anti-Western drive, it is no good blaming the Communists alone for this state of affairs. The Soviets' anti-Israeli line was hesitant at first; only when it was realized in Moscow that there would be no sharp reaction from Israel herself did it become more outspoken. Israel should have reacted vigorously to every anti-Israeli move on the part of the Soviets from the very first. Even a small country can compel Moscow to modify its policy if it shows some nerve; the success of Finland's stand in 1939, and of Tito's in 1948, are cases in point. There is evidence that the Communists have felt uneasy about the effect of their anti-Israeli policy in the West and the fateful historical parallel people might draw from it.*

In Israel it was believed apparently that the country's delicate international position made it imprudent for her to offend the Soviet Union. But the Soviet leaders, like the Arab ones, tend to be impressed only by

boldness and determination; hesitancy, the desire to hush things up and seek agreement behind the scenes, has no effect on them whatsoever. Mapam, Israel's fellow-traveling Socialist party, has been negotiating behind the scenes for three years now to get one of its members, Mordecai Oren, out of a Czech jail. The result is that the Marxist-Leninist Oren continues to languish there, whereas most of the people who were jailed with him have been freed.

Irritation at Western policy towards Israel, on the other hand, has occasionally produced rather unrealistic ideas and suggestions in the Israeli press. *Davar*, the Histadrut organ, remarked the other day, with wonderful naivety, that it had never been able to understand why Russia failed to appreciate progressive and peace-loving Israel. A political correspondent in *Ha'aretz* came up very wide-eyed with the suggestion that if Israel did not get support from the West, it might be able to obtain a Soviet guarantee of the status quo in the Middle East. Such utterances show only too clearly the fallacies underlying much Israeli think-

*Soviet policy on Israel and the Soviet attitude towards East European Jewry have been sharply criticized from opposite quarters in recent weeks. The extreme nationalist groups in Syria and Egypt have taken the position that the Soviet leaders' "moderate" anti-Jewish line is not enough. After all, more spectacular things, such as new mass trials of Jews, etc., etc., had been promised. The Damascus newspaper *Al Kabas* reported a great demonstration against the head of the Syrian Communists following his return from Moscow; several hundred students are said to have petitioned the Syrian Chamber of Deputies to remove him from the Foreign Affairs Committee. Why? Because Bakhdash took part in the 20th Party Congress in Moscow along with Communist delegates from Israel. The latter, though they defamed Israel and the Jews, remain Jews in the eyes of the Syrian semi-fascists, and Jews have to be exterminated. All this means that the Arab Communists, who cannot let themselves be outdone by any potential rivals in the nationalist movement, are under pressure to adopt an even more anti-Jewish line than the present one. At the World Peace Council in Stockholm, they vied with the extreme nationalists in offering anti-Jewish (not just anti-Israel) slogans.

But there has been a lot of criticism of this recently from the other side; the West European press has been full of it. With Khrushchev and

Bulganin visiting England, and a greater sensitivity in general to foreign opinion evident in Moscow, it can be assumed that the Soviet leaders are not unconcerned about the effects of the "moderate" anti-Jewish line on the West. The fact that only Slansky, whose trial had a pronounced anti-Semitic character, remains unrehabilitated among the old "criminals of Titoism," for the obvious reason that he was a Jew, has made a bad impression even on French fellow-travelers, who are not easily shocked. The arrest of Jews in the Soviet Union for possessing Hebrew or Yiddish newspapers, the hostile Soviet attitude to Israel, and other indications have provoked doubts in the British press as to the sincerity of the "retreat from Stalinism." In the United States, even the *Daily Worker* has criticized the persecution of Jews inside the Soviet world.

There are already clear signs that the Soviet leaders do not relish paying for their popularity with the Arab extremists by a bad press in the West. The excuses they make haven't improved matters any: "We are not against the Jews in general. Israel yes, but Israel is a different matter. . . . The rights of Russian and satellite Jews? A purely internal problem. . . ." Soviet "Jewish policy," in short, is in a state of flux, with the Arab extremists pulling hard in one direction and Western public opinion in the other. It will be interesting to see what the outcome is.

ing about the sources of the present Middle Eastern crisis. American unwillingness to help Israel springs, after all, largely—though not exclusively—from the very fear of being outmaneuvered by the Russians in the Middle East.

I do not intend here to outline a policy for the West vis-à-vis the new Moscow-Cairo axis. The general tendency in the West to let things drift is no great surprise. Why should we expect the West to show initiative and leadership in the Middle East when it has not done so elsewhere? Two general observations are nevertheless in order: one is that the situation has become far too critical to leave any policy-making to the oil companies with their rivalries and narrow, conflicting interests. If the West does not want to see every barrel of Middle Eastern oil go whistling down the Eastern wind, the whole matter of oil policy must be placed under the control and direction of an inter-governmental board with full authority. This may of course be an extreme measure, but extreme measures are called for if there is to be no catastrophe.

Secondly, it should be clear that firmness alone can have an effect on the Cairo-Damascus axis. Probably nowhere else in the world is there more adulation of the strong and contempt for the weak than among Arabs. Russia is esteemed and feared because she is strong, America is held in scant respect because nobody really needs to be afraid of her.

The rulers of Egypt and Syria do not, after all, want to become junior partners in the Soviet bloc; they will change their tune fast enough and drop much of their present intransigence if only the West forcefully expresses its displeasure with their present course. Whenever Colonel Nasser has faced a determined, inflexible opponent he has proved very reasonable indeed: the Cairo junta retreated ignominiously when Adenauer made it clear that he would go ahead with West German reparations to Israel regardless of Arab threats. Nasser retreated when the Sudan stood up against his campaign for its merger with Egypt. He has proved reasonable on other occasions and may prove so again, provided one chooses the right way to approach him.